

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1-7, 9-10, 13, and 15-19 remain in the application, of which claims 1, 5, 9 and 16-19 are independent. Applicant has cancelled claims 4, 8, 12, and 15 herein.

The applicant gratefully acknowledges indication by the Examiner that claims 4, 8, 12 and 15 contain allowable subject matter.

After careful consideration of the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action, applicant respectfully submits that as amended, claims 1-7, 9-10, 13, and 15-19 patentably distinguish over the art of record, and requests allowance of all pending claims, as discussed further below.

Claim rejections under 35 USC 102

Claims 1-3, 5-7, 9-11, 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by Yamada et al., published U.S. patent application 2001/0000052. The Examiner states that Yamada et al. disclose a personal watercraft 10 with a main lid 26 and a secondary service opening with a lid 166, and asserts that the two lids allow the use of both hands of a service worker.

The applicant respectfully disagrees with this rejection. Yamada discloses a personal watercraft including a deck structure with multiple covered storage areas formed therein. However, the deck structure of Yamada fails to include adjacent first and second service openings formed in the deck and provided to allow access by a service person to internal mechanical equipment stored below the deck. The two openings identified by the Examiner are not closely spaced service access openings as claimed in claim 1 and 9. In the Yamada reference, the opening covered by the lid 166 is not formed in the deck of the structure disclosed in Yamada.

Instead, the opening covered by the lid 166 is formed in a container 142 located under an

opening 22 formed in a bow portion of an upper deck section 18 (Yamada, paragraphs 0051, 0060). Therefore, applicant's claims are distinguishable from the teaching of Yamada.

Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's rejection, and with his reading of the teachings of the references. However, in the interests of expediting prosecution of this application, the applicant has amended independent claims 1, 5, and 9 herein to more clearly distinguish the applicant's claimed invention from the disclosure of the prior art. Specifically, in claims 1 and 9, the access ports are recited to be positioned on a distended portion of the deck. Claim 5 has been amended to recite that the claimed opening is substantially aligned with a steering shaft in a fore-and-aft direction of the watercraft.

The applicant respectfully submits that these features are not taught, suggested, or disclosed in the prior art, and that claims 1-3, 5-7, 9-11, 13, and 14 are now in condition for allowance.

Other Matters

New claims 16-19 have been added to the application which correspond to claims 4, 8, 12, and 15, respectively, canceled herein and rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the basic claim and the intervening claims. New claims 16-19 are fully supported by the specification, and no new matter is added to the application.

Conclusion

Based on all of the foregoing, applicant respectfully submits that all of the objections and rejections set forth in the Office Action are overcome, and that as presently amended, all of the pending claims are believed to be allowable over all of the references of record, whether considered singly or in combination.

Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of record, and allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner is not fully convinced of all of the claims now in the application, applicant respectfully requests that he telephonically contact applicant's undersigned representative to expeditiously resolve prosecution of the application.

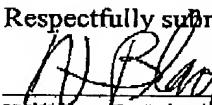
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the \$352 fee for four independent claims in excess of three to Deposit Account 50-0744 in the name of Carrier, Blackman & Associates, P.C.

A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Favorable consideration is respectfully requested.

Customer No. 21828
Carrier, Blackman & Associates, P.C.
24101 Novi Road, Suite 100
Novi, Michigan 48375
October 7, 2004

Respectfully submitted,


William D. Blackman
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 32,397
(248) 344-4422

CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted, via facsimile, to Examining Group 1762 of the United States Patent and Trademark Office on October 7, 2004, at the number (703) 872-9306.

WDB/kmm

